

Town of Wethersfield
Economic Development & Improvement Commission
Regular Meeting – Thursday November 8, 2007 – 12:00 Noon
Town Manager's Conference Room, Town Hall
MINUTES

1. Call To Order – Chair Betty Rosania called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.
2. Attendance and Quorum (6 members required)

Members in attendance: Chair Betty Rosania, Joan Hughes, Kate Mullen, Doug Sacks, John Adamian, Ken Rizzio and Bill Knapp.

Members absent: Tony Homicki, Chris Lyons, Howard Greenblatt, Chris Monroe, Brian Silver and Joe Cornelio.

Also in attendance: Bonnie Therrien – Town Manager, Andy Adil, Mayor, Paul Montinieri – Town Council, Charlie Forsdick – Tourism Commission and Peter Gillespie – Economic Development Manager/Town Planner.

3. Old Business

a. Status – Redevelopment Agency – Bond Referendum – A discussion ensued regarding the defeat of the referendum. Mayor Adil mentioned that going forward it will be important to educate the public through community forums. Paul Montinieri discussed other budgetary options, the need to build enthusiasm and to create a presence in the community months in advance. Betty Rosania noted that many were blind sighted by the opposition's approach which was tough to fight and catch up to. Doug Sacks suggested televised meetings and using case studies to sell on success stories. Betty Rosania also noted that Tony Homicki ended up as a one man show and that more support would need to be shown. Bonnie Therrien discussed the need for a Redevelopment Liaison to EDIC.

b. Status Church Street/SDH Streetscape Project – Bonnie Therrien reported on the receipt of an additional \$1 million in funding through the Governor's budget. Peter Gillespie reported that the contractor is waiting for DOT approval in order to start the projet.

c. Website Update Status – Peter Gillespie reported that the new website was up and running on. Tom Hemphill is working on suggested revisions.

d. Preserve America – Peter Gillespie noted that the Committee is working with JMA to get a 1st draft report and that a public hearing will be set for December followed by the issuance of the final report.

e. Horse and Carriage Rides – Status – Peter Gillespie reported that Allegra Farms of East Haddam will commence with rides on weekends in December and through the New Year. He noted that there is still a need for volunteers to collect money and organize other logistical aspects.

f. Façade Program Promotion and PR – Peter Gillespie reported that two promotional signs would be modified and placed on the properties being actively renovated.

4. New Business

- a. Greater Hartford Guest Guide 2008 – Peter Gillespie reported that a new ad was completed by PITA Communications for \$500.
- b. Objectives and Strategies 2007/2008 – Denise Bradley reported that the Finance Committee met on October 3rd and discussed reformatting the document into a condensed version. Howard Greenblatt passed around a prototype from Essex as a model and noted the importance of prioritizing goals and establishing new timeframes.
- c. Salute to Business – The event will take place on December 12th at the Wethersfield Country Club from 5:30 – 8:30 p. m.
- d. Façade Applications – Peter Gillespie discussed the recommendations from the November 1st meeting of the Finance Subcommittee as follows:

1. Wolcott Hill Condo Assoc. 685 Wolcott Hill Road – Façade Application

In September of 2005 the Commission voted to award a façade loan for this project under our previous program for \$12,500 for work that included window installation, brick work, new doors and exterior trim. At the time, we had limited funding for these projects and we awarded only \$12,500 towards the project. The estimated project amount is actually \$34,107.10 and 50% would be \$17,054. The property owner has requested that we increase the amount to this recalculated figure and has asked for consideration under the revised program. The subcommittee recommends approval.

2. Wethersfield Family LLC, Linda Pinn, Manager 217-233 Main Street – Façade Application

The applicant has requested funding to install dark green awning to all 7 storefronts in this building. This work estimated at \$12,465.60 and the 50% match is \$6,232.80. The subcommittee recommends approval.

3. J. Michael's Tavern 222 Main Street – Façade Application

The new operators, Michael and Roger DiPiano have requested funding for signage, landscaping, lighting, exterior painting, patio fencing and parking lot sealing. The work is estimated at \$45,130. It is my understanding, based upon my conversations with the Town Manager that the Town is responsible for the exterior painting of the building as per the lease terms, therefore \$12,000 of the project cost would not be eligible. The eligible cost would be \$33,100, 50% would be \$16,550. The subcommittee recommends approval of this amount with a condition that the Town Council must approve the grant award.

4. 291 Ridge Road LLC – John Tartaglia – Phase 2, The Ridge at Wethersfield, Ridge Road, 15 Condominium Units – Tax Incentive

The developer has requested a tax abatement for Phase 2 of this 55+ residential project. The project estimate is \$6,050,000, and 2 new jobs would be created. The Tax Assessor reports that the real estate assessment is presently \$740,200 which equates to \$24,382.19 in taxes. Per the Town's schedule, the project would potentially be eligible for a 30% abatement on the increase assessment for up to 7 years which is about \$14,000 per year. The subcommittee is not recommending approval of this request.

Kate Mullen made a motion to accept the recommendation of the Finance subcommittee to approve Façade Application proposals for 685 Wolcott Hill Road, 217-233 Main Street and 222 Main Street and to deny the Tax Incentive proposal for 291 Ridge Road LLC. Joan Hughes seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

5. Reports of the Town Manager -

Town Manager's Report – Bonnie Therrien reported on the following:

- Property revaluations are underway.

Town Council Liaison's Report – Paul Montinieri reported on the following:

- Redevelopment Bond Referendum

Planning & Zoning Commission Liaison's Report – No report was given.

Tourism Commission Liaison's Report – Paul Montinieri reported on the following:

- Horse and Carriage Rides
- Fall Weekend
- J. Michael's Tavern

Director of Planning and Economic Development's Report – Reference was made to the October 10 monthly report.

6. Chairman's Report – Betty Rosania discussed concern regarding the necessity of cleaning up blighted areas.

7. Sub-Committee Reports - Marketing and Communications – There was nothing additional to report.

Financial Strategies – There was nothing additional to report. Ken Rizzio commented that he had seen a recent cable tv show on Channel 14 that he felt was misinformed and took cheap shots at Town staff. Betty Rosania suggested that the Town should have its own show to promote the positive things going on in Town.

8. Minutes- Approval of October 7, 2007 meeting minutes – Joan Hughes made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 7, 2007 meeting with amendments. Bill Knapp seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

9. Next Meeting – December 13, 2007

10. Correspondence

11. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p. m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise Bradley, Assistant Planner